

DMR/ASD Updates

Commissioner Morrissey's Quarterly Quote:



Greetings,

This time of the year marks a significant period of change for New Englanders, as we move from the long balmy days of Summer to the cool crisp mornings of Fall. Unfortunately, this year's seasonal transition involved the wrenching hurricanes in the South. I am thankful for the actions taken here to help those displaced by the hurricanes rebuild their lives. Many DMR staff have been heavily involved in the efforts at Camp Edwards and I am grateful for their ongoing dedication and support.

Despite the fact that some DMR staff have been diverted to help the hurricane victims, the efforts to develop the infrastructure of the new Autism Division continue to move forward. The work around contracting with the Autism Centers for additional staffing resources is underway as are efforts to contract with the community organizations involved in the training of First Responders. Discussions have begun in earnest around the development of a Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Waiver specifically for children on the autism spectrum. Finally, the development of the Statewide Autism Resource Guide continues with the assistance of the newly established National Autism Center, who is helping to ensure that the Resource Guide includes the latest efficacy-based scientific research.

While, this is an exciting time here at DMR's new Autism Division, I understand that change brings about a level of uncertainty. I want to ensure everyone—families, providers, staff, advocacy groups and others dedicated to children with autism—that we are committed to working together every step of the way to create services and supports that reflect the needs of families. We hope that our openness to discussing the developments of the Division will continue to provide more clarity.

Questions & Answers:

Over the last few months numerous questions have been raised relating to the new policies and procedures of the Autism Division. Therefore, this issue of *DMR/ASD Updates* will focus on clarifying these questions and concerns.



1. Who exactly does the Autism Division serve?

A. The Autism Division serves children ages 3-18 who have a Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) as defined by the DSM-IV Revised Edition. PDDs include: Autistic Disorder, Rett's Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, PDD-NOS and Asperger's Syndrome.

2. What if my child is receiving DMR's Children's Services? Do I have to also apply to the Autism Division?

A. No, you do not have to apply at this time. DMR will update you when this need arises.

3. I understand that if I am a family currently connected to DMR that I do not have to apply at this time; however, how do I know if there are services in the new Division that I might want instead of what I get now?

A. Please be assured that we are dedicated to developing a fair and equitable service system for all children with Pervasive Developmental Disabilities. We have spent a lot of time considering how best to transition children into the new Division and will do so when the capacity and fiscal resources exist.

4. My child who has a PDD had been found ineligible for DMR Children's Services in the past; however, now that there is an Autism Division under the umbrella of DMR can we now apply to the Autism Division?

A. Yes, we encourage families to contact their Regional Eligibility Team at DMR to determine what additional information is necessary for this eligibility process. A listing of the Regional DMR offices can be found on the DMR website at www.mass.gov/dmr.



Q & A: (Continued)

5. I have heard that the Governor signed legislation requiring DMR to apply for a Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver to serve children with Pervasive Developmental Disorders. What is a waiver?

A. This is true, DMR is required to submit an application to CMS (Center for Medicaid/Medicare Services) for a HCBS Waiver for children with PDDs within six months from the date the bill became law (October 2005). A waiver program is designed to provide certain supports to individuals in home and community settings. This program is partially funded by the federal government which reimburses the Commonwealth for a portion of the cost of the services and supports provided to individuals who are in the waiver program. Individuals do not 'waive' any of their Medicaid rights by participating in the waiver program. At this time, the Autism Division, the DMR Office of Policy, Planning and Children's Services, MassHealth and others with expertise in this arena are working together to determine the eligibility criteria and services that this waiver will include. More information about the waiver will be forthcoming in future issues of the *DMR ASD/Updates*.

6. I received a packet of information from the DMR Regional Eligibility Team and noticed that there is a Family Check-List that I am supposed to fill-out, yet my child has not had all of these assessments done. Do I have to go get them done or can I qualify without having all of the items listed?

A. The Family Check-List for the Diagnostic Verification Process is intended to act as a guide. Please fill-in the information that you do have on your child. Our goal is to determine that a diagnosis comes from a licensed clinician. The clinicians that the Eligibility Teams are looking for include: Developmental Pediatricians, Neurologists, Psychologists and Psychiatrists.

7. I have sent in all the necessary paperwork to the Regional Eligibility Team. When can I expect an answer regarding my eligibility status?

A. The verification process is underway within each of the four DMR Eligibility Teams. The teams are reading the files and assessing that the necessary information is present. In tandem with this process, the Division is working on the creation of new regulations to support the Autism Spectrum Division. We anticipate the public hearing process will occur in the next few months and, once finalized, the Eligibility Teams will send out the proper eligibility letters to families. In the interim, please contact your local Autism Center for information on programs and support.

Autism Resource Centers*

*All Autism Centers provide information and referral resources for all five PDDs, with the exception of AANE whose focus is Asperger's Syndrome.

Asperger's Association of New England

Phone: 617- 393-3824

Website: <http://aane.autistics.org>

Autism Alliance of MetroWest

Serving: MetroWest

Phone: 508-652-9900

Website: www.autismalliance.org

Autism Resource Center

Serving: Central Massachusetts

Phone: 508-595-9101

Website: www.arccm.org

The Autism Support Center

Serving: Northeast

Phone: 978-777-9135

Website: www2.shore.net/~nsarc/Home.htm

Boston Families for Autism

Serving: Boston

Phone: 617-327-9486

Website: www.bostonautism.org



Community Autism Resources

Serving: Southeast

Phone: 508-379-0371

Website: www.community-autism-resources.org

Community Resources for People with Autism

Serving: Western Massachusetts

Phone: 413-529-2428

Website: www.theassn.org/crautismindex.htm

TILL: Autism Support Center

Serving: Greater Boston

Phone: 781-302-4600

Website: www.tillinc.org/index.htm

The Family Autism Center

Serving: Norfolk County/South West

Phone: 781-762-4001 x 329

Website: <http://www.sncarc.org/autism.html>

For more information Contact: Cariann Harsh, DMR Autism Spectrum Division
@ 617-624-7769 or via E-mail: Cariann.Harsh@state.ma.us